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UNCLAS DAMASCUS 006640

SIPDIS

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND  
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBURGEOIS, DBENZE AND  
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER  
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC  
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Syria/Lebanon, Palestinian  
Territories, Iraq (12/23-26)

1. Summary: Weekend Syrian papers reported statements by Lebanese personalities emphasizing distinguished ties with Syria, listing among them Lebanese Minister of Energy & Water Mohammed Fneish who underlined the importance of preserving "the distinguished relations with Syria to face the Israeli danger;" a statement by Lebanese MP Mohammed Raad, who called for national dialogue including all national issues, above all, relations with Syria, preserving the resistance and its weapons, as well as revealing the truth about the Hariri assassination; a statement by Lebanese ex-minister Wiaam Wahhab emphasizing that the only solution for Lebanon is to form a national reconciliation government and to hold early parliamentary elections; and a statement by Kamal Shatila, Chairman of the Lebanese Popular Conference, saying that internationalization measures are part of the Greater Middle East plan. Syrian editorials also continued their campaign against the anti-Syria forces in Lebanon led by the Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblat and Future Current leader Sa'd al-Hariri. As for developments in the Palestinian territories, papers reported Sharon's decision to establish a security zone in northern Gaza, and Hamas' resolve to run for candidacy in parliamentary election.

On Iraq, papers reported demonstrations calling for new elections and changing the Higher Election Commission. Headlines featured PM Jaafari's rejection of new elections.

End of summary.

2. Selected Headlines:

"Lebanese Minister of Water and Energy Mohammed Fneish reiterates the importance of fortifying Lebanon by establishing good relations with Syria. Head of al-Wafaa Bloc for resistance, and Member of Parliament Mohammed Ra'ad: We protest opening our doors to foreign intervention. Former Lebanese Minister Wiam Wahhab: The only solution in Lebanon is by forming a new national reconciliation government and holding early elections" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/26)

"Lebanese President calls on the Lebanese to unite ranks and learn a lesson from miscalculating gamblers. Nasarallah [Secretary General of Hizbollah]: We disagree with the government on national issues; Israelis say: our strategy in Lebanon will be realized by creating a gap between Syria and Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/24)

"Lebanese calls to cling fast to national principles. Lebanese MP Raad: Unilateral political decision is behind the crisis Shatila [Chairman of the Lebanese Popular Conference]: Internationalization measures are part of the Greater Middle East plan" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/25)

"Walkout will continue in the Lebanese Prime Ministry until further notice. Lebanese President refuses to head the Lebanese Cabinet. Ex-Lebanese Premiere Salim al-Hoss: International powers are behind the tension in Syrian-Lebanese relations" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/23)

"Sharon approves Gaza security zone. The Palestinian Authority rejects elections without the participation of Jerusalem's inhabitants. Bethlehem celebrates Christmas" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/25)

"Ministers of Likud and Kadima demand invasion of Gaza. The world celebrates Christmas amid Israeli harassment of pilgrims to Bethlehem. Patriarch of Jerusalem calls for the removal of the racist wall" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/25)

"Mofaz orders tightening the siege of Palestinian territories and to proceed with assassinations. Head of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas rejects postponement of Palestinian elections" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/25)

"Palestinian city of Al-Nasra hosts a mass rally as an expression of solidarity with Syria next Thursday" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/25)

"Israeli occupation will wage war in the Gaza strip.

Palestinians confirm Israel's intention to block Palestinian truth about the Hariri assassination; a statement by Lebanese ex-minister Wiaam Wahhab emphasizing that the only solution for Lebanon is to form a national reconciliation government and to hold early parliamentary elections; and a statement by Kamal Shatila, Chairman of the Lebanese Popular Conference, saying that internationalization measures are part of the Greater Middle East plan. Syrian editorials also continued their campaign against the anti-Syria forces in Lebanon led by the Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblat and Future Current leader Sa'd al-Hariri. As for developments in the Palestinian territories, papers reported Sharon's decision to establish a security zone in northern Gaza, and Hamas' resolve to run for candidacy in parliamentary election.

elections. Hamas confirms its right to have candidates" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/24)

"Protests against the outcome of the Iraqi elections continue. The Electoral Higher Commission receives 1500 complaints and Jaafari rejects new elections" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/25)

"Iraqi demonstrations demand repeating elections and changing the Higher Commission. Two US soldiers are killed in Baghdad; six Sudanese are kidnapped" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/24)

"Tony Blair and Donald Rumsfeld, suddenly in Iraq; 35 Iraqi groups threaten confrontation and reject the election results" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/23)

"The US Congress endorses US-Israeli military deals" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/25)

"Former US Senator Tom Daschle: Congress did not give the President a power of spying without judicial authorization. US House of Representatives let Bush down. Congress renews the Patriot Act for one month" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/24)

### 13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"It Has Become Intolerable, No Silence after Today" Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, said (12/23): "A gang of Lebanese who do not hide their hostility toward Syria have abandoned tactfulness and every sense of shame. They have begun to encroach, in undesirable insolence, upon everything related to Syria and every honorable and nationalist aspect of the Lebanese stage. They believe that through the language of curses and rude words, the continuation of lies, and their joining in on the US-Israeli pressure campaign, they will be able to convince the Lebanese and Arab public, and consequently the International Investigation Commission, of their preset positions and feeble 'evidence' through which they previously misled international justice and derailed the investigation, leading it only in Syria's direction.

"This vulgar gang is knowingly leading Lebanon toward the unknown, adding fuel to the fire, serving the US-Zionist plan whether it admits or denies it, and trying to undermine the strong Syrian-Lebanese relationship...

"Our people no longer accept silence in response to this group, whose only weapon is lying... Yes, things have come to a head, and silence about their involvement in the conspiracy against Syria and about their encroachment upon Syria is no longer acceptable. Their lies and allegations are unacceptable. Their cards, files, and dirty roles the resistance and its weapons, as well as revealing the truth about the Hariri assassination; a statement by Lebanese ex-minister Wiaam Wahhab emphasizing that the only solution for Lebanon is to form a national reconciliation government and to hold early parliamentary elections; and a statement by Kamal Shatila, Chairman of the Lebanese Popular Conference, saying that internationalization measures are part of the Greater Middle East plan.

Syrian editorials also continued their campaign against the anti-Syria forces in Lebanon led by the Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblat and Future Current leader Sa'd al-Hariri.

As for developments in the Palestinian territories, papers reported Sharon's decision to establish a security zone in northern Gaza, and Hamas' resolve to run for candidacy in parliamentary election.

against Syria and Lebanon must be exposed, and so must their cooperation with the enemies of the Arab nation and their cold-blooded involvement in the plans of hegemony through which superpowers are trying to bring the region back under colonialist submission."

"A Political Adolescent"

Ahmad Dawwa, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, said (12/23): "Sa'd al-Hariri's new allegation and accusation against Damascus of waging war to topple Lebanon's democratic government, show confusion and

imbalance.... After the false testimony in Al-Hariri's assassination case was exposed, the gang of deception and internationalization in Lebanon had to find a new accusation against Syria to continue to mislead the Lebanese people. "Syria has said nothing to suggest that it wants to change the democratic system in Lebanon. On the contrary FM Shara's statements in Cairo stressed Syria's desire to build the best relations with Lebanon and to maintain Lebanon's security and stability.

"The fact is that the gang of deception and forgery, led by political novices, is the party that is interfering in Syria's affairs, once by leveling false accusations and once through calls for a regime change in Syria. Didn't Jumblat make such a call a few days ago?"

"Interference in Syrian affairs has become the main characteristic of the statements of Lebanese politicians. Thus, they are nothing but parrots working as unofficial spokesmen for others."

"The Guise of Modesty Has Fallen"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented 12/24: "Some Lebanese politicians attacked Arab League Secretary General Amr Musa for his purported plan to clear the air between Syria and Lebanon. These politicians are launching a campaign against Musa because the success of his efforts would foil the conspiracy they are hatching against Syria. Thus the team of Sa'd al-Hariri, Walid Junblatt, and their partners reveal an inherent enmity not only toward Syria but also toward Arabism....

"Sa'd al-Hariri, leader of the Future Current who manages the anti-Syria group from afar and who is himself managed from nearby and afar, gave an interesting exclusive statement to an Arabic-speaking Channel Al-Arabiya, in which he attacked Syria and accused it of practicing terrorism. Where was Sheikh Sa'd al-Hariri when Syria was fighting terrorism and suffering from it? Does he remember --when he was a child playing with his toys--the terrorist operations that Syria experienced at various stages?

"We do not want him to remember. He has no memory anyway, or perhaps they designed a special memory for him to accommodate specific and known plans and dreams. But if he does not remember--and this is his [only] excuse--then what excuse does he have for the racist terrorist attacks on the resistance and its weapons, as well as revealing the truth about the Hariri assassination; a statement by Lebanese ex-minister Wiaam Wahhab emphasizing that the only solution for Lebanon is to form a national reconciliation government and to hold early parliamentary elections; and a statement by Kamal Shatila, Chairman of the Lebanese Popular Conference, saying that internationalization measures are part of the Greater Middle East plan.

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Syrian workers and vehicles in Lebanon? Can he deny that these are terrorist acts par excellence, and that they are being carried out by a handful of supporters and party members who are fighting under the swords of Sa'd al-Hariri, Walid Jumblat, Marwan Hamadah, and other people showing ingratitude to Syria and its sacrifices and positions? How can Al-Hariri Junior install himself as a judge and pass a decisive verdict that Syria is behind the assassination of Lebanese figures?

"We would like to remind this racist group of the saying: 'People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.' Those who incite terrorism, exercise media and intellectual terrorism, and use money to reach parliament and control the destiny of a country and to sabotage its national unity cannot give us lessons in nationalism or classify countries according to the US-Israeli way, labeling this country as democratic and that country as terrorist."

Johnson-Casares